Fresh Diplomatic Initiatives with Gulf Countries

*645. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to initiate fresh diplomatic relationship with Muslim countries in the Gulf region after having close relationship with America;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether he has visited the Muslim countries of Gulf region in this regard; and

(d) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The Gulf region is India's neighbourhood. India enjoys traditionally close, historical and multidimensional ties with the Gulf countries. These relations are neither dependent nor subject to India's relations with other countries.

(c) and (d) Ministerial level consultations continue to be held regularly on an ongoing basis to further strengthen and enhance our political, economic, and cultural relations with the countries of the Gulf. It is in this context that visits to and from the Gulf countries have taken place. All these visits have contributed to further enhancing India's profile in the region and improving relations bilaterally.

Corruption in project Clearance

*646. SHRI RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that corruption is the first major problem as the funds earmarked for a particular project are not reaching their intended beneficiaries;

(b) whether the above observations made by Piara Singh Khabra as reported in Times of India dated 7th April, 2000, are true; and

(c) what steps are being taken to clean the administration at all levels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME

IMPLEMENTATION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) and (b) Shri Piara Singh Khabra (of the Indian origin), a Member of the House of Commons, UK, during his interview with Mr. Gurmukh Singh (The Times of India) has observed:

"As we see it, corruption is the first major problem. It is hampering India's progress as the funds earmarked for a particular project are not reaching the intended beneficiaries."

(The Times of India, Delhi edition — 6th April, 2000.)

The statement does not seem to pertain to Central Sector projects *per se*, but to the plans and programmes undertaken by the Government in general. Analysis carried out by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in respect of projects on its monitor indicates that the following are the major factors accounting for time and cost over-runs:

(i) Fund constraints

(ii) Land acquisition problems

(iii) Delay in civil works

(iv) Delay in award of contracts

(v) Delay in procurement and receipt of equipment.

Apart from projects, evaluations are conducted periodically to gauge the efficacy of the Programmes in removing poverty. The Ministry of Rural Development carries out concurrent evaluation of anti-poverty programmes implemented in rural areas. The results of the fifth round of concurrent evaluation of Integrated Rural Development Programme (1995-96) indicate that though a large number of beneficiaries have substantially improved their living conditions, major areas of concern remain. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe beneficiaries were only 40 per cent of the total beneficiaries assisted as against the target of 50 per cent. Only 14 per cent women-headed households received assistance. Around 22 per cent of the old IRDP beneficiaries had reportedly made payments to Government/bank staff for getting IRDP assistance. Some of the other evaluation studies commissioned by the Ministry of Rural Development and the Planning

Commission have also indicated that assistance in some cases was provided to families which were not below poverty line. The evaluation of Wage Employment Programme shows that these programmes were better targeted and did provide employment opportunities in lean season. Even in such programmes work was executed often through contractors which was not permitted and muster rolls were not properly maintained.

(c) As for steps to combat corruption, the Government has recently taken the following initiatives:—

(i) The Central Vigilance Commission has been vested powers vide para 3(v) of Department of Personnel & Training Resolution No. 371/20/99-AVD.III dated 4th April, 1999 to exercise superintendence over the vigilance administration. The Commission has issued several instructions to reduce the scope of corruption, such as, creating a culture of honesty, greater transparency in administration, electronics clearance system and computerization of banks, sensitizing the public etc. The Central Vigilance Commission has also issued Special Chapters on vigilance management in public sector banks and public sector undertakings.

(ii) The Central Vigilance Commission Bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 20.12.1999 to confer statutory status upon the Central Vigilance Commission and to incorporate the other directions of the Supreme Court in Vineet Narain vs Union of India. The Bill stands referred to the Joint Committee of both the Houses of Parliament on 21.12.1999 for consideration.

(iii) Some of the major steps taken to insulate the CBI from extraneous influences and to improve its functioning are:

- Director, CBI has been given a minimum tenure of 2 years.
- A CBI Selection Board has been constituted to make recommendations for the appointment of Director, CBI and for reduction/extension in tenure/pre-mature repatriation of officers of the rank of SP and above in CBI.
- 183 posts, including technical posts, have been sanctioned for augmenting the Special Crime Division and Economic Offences Wing of the CBI.

(iv) Lok Pal Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 3.8.1998 to set up the Lok Pal to look into the allegations of corruption against high public functionaries. The Bill, however, lapsed on the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha on 26.4.1999. A Group of Ministers have been constituted to consider contention aspect.

(v) The Government set up a Working Group on "Right to Information and Transparency" in January, 1997. It submitted its report to the Government on 21st May, 1997. The recommendations made by the Working Group were examined comprehensively and a draft Bill incorporating the recommendations of the Group of Ministers is under preparation.

(vi) Based on the findings of the various Evaluation Studies, the mid-course corrections have been carried out in the Poverty Alleviation Programmes periodically. Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes were restructured w.e.f. 1.4.1999 to improve the efficacy of these Programmes. The Integrated Rural Development Programme was restructured as a holistic programme of micro enterprise covering all aspects of self-employment including organization of rural poor into self-help groups, their capacity building, planning of activity cluster, infrastructure build-up, technology, credit and marketing facilities. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has been restructured with the primary objective of creating demand-driven community village infrasctructure. Employment Assurance Scheme has been restructured as a single wage-employment programme and seeks to provide employment in lean season. Self-employment and Wage-employment Schemes in urban areas were also restructured w.e.f. 1.12.1997 under Swaranjayanti Shahri Rozgar yojana. The Government has taken measures to ensure active participation of the people as partners in the process of development.

Permanent Membership of Security Council

*647. SHRI K.M. KHAN:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is a serious contender for a permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations;